

# Sons & Brothers Building Healthy Communities

## Case Study

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Discovering better ways  
to solve social problems

## Reflections from The Endowment

An expanding body of academic literature has documented that racial and ethnic disparities exist across a broad array of economic and health domains. These disparities have developed and persisted over time in the context of historical and structural racism that has shaped a range of policies, programs, and systemic practices that create disadvantages for certain groups. This history and institutionalization of disadvantage has meant that such inequities have persistent, profound and long lasting effects that impact all levels of society. The sub-groups that are particularly vulnerable within this context are low-income boys and young men of color.

With its mission of expanding access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities, and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians, The California Endowment (The Endowment), since its launch in 1996, has been committed to pursuing health equity and focusing on the needs of vulnerable populations. This commitment to equity was central when the Building Healthy Communities (BHC) strategy was being developed 5 years ago. Board and staff both recognized that in order to improve the health and well-being of whole communities, significant attention must be paid to community residents who were experiencing the worst health disparities. When we looked at the demographic data and the health related indicators in our state, we learned that an overwhelming number of young people in California (over 75 percent) are from communities of color. We also found that on critical indicators of well-being: educational attainment, income, health access, exposure to violence, young males of color were disproportionately disadvantaged.

In recognizing the profound adverse impact of race and gender on the health of poor communities, The Endowment concluded that building healthy communities could not be achieved in any meaningful way unless the negative health trends experienced by young men and boys of color can be reversed. If we wanted to improve the health of California over time, if we wanted to help change the health trajectory of our most vulnerable communities, then we would need to focus on young people—especially those who were not on track to succeed. Consequently, The California Endowment's BHC strategy identified closing the health gap for young men and boys of color as a strategic objective. To operationalize this goal, The Endowment launched the Sons & Brothers (formerly known as Boys and Young Men of Color) program as part of our BHC strategy.

In August, 2013, the board approved a seven-year, \$50 million investment in Sons & Brothers, to help transform California's dominant narrative regarding California's boys and young men of color from "marginalized and off-track," to "connected and on-track." The research on child and youth development suggests that there are several key predictive markers or milestones that are associated with successful youth development: reading at grade level by the 3rd grade, high school graduation, and postsecondary certification. With this in mind, The Endowment identified the following health-related intervention points aimed at increasing the likelihood that all vulnerable boys and young men achieve these milestones.

1. **3rd grade reading and chronic absence:** If a child can't read well by 3rd grade, he is likely to fall behind and drop out of school. Chronic absences from school are a leading cause of poor academic performance;
2. **Suspensions and early truancy:** Each suspension doubles the chance of dropout and triples the chance of involvement with the criminal justice system;

3. **Justice system involvement:** The system is expensive, often harms kids and doesn't keep us safe.

When youth overcome trauma and adverse experiences, they become community assets, not liabilities. When boys attend school regularly, reach 3<sup>rd</sup> grade able to read, and complete their education without getting expelled or involved in the justice system, we put them on a sure path to becoming healthy men. When youth develop as leaders, individual transformation leads to community transformation.

Over the past 4 years, The Endowment has been strategizing, exploring, and acting in support of our sons and brothers. The case study that follows provides insight into how the Sons & Brothers work has evolved and shows us a promising example of how The Endowment can work collaboratively both internally as well as its with external partners to advance a collective agenda.

While the focus of the case study is exploring how the foundation has worked strategically with local and state partners in advancing our goals, it is also important to lift up some of the lessons—ingredients for success, if you will—that we have learned as an organization as we implement this work.

## Key Ingredients for Success

### *An Explicit Focus on Equity and Fairness: The Tip of the Building Healthy Communities Spear*

Improving the health of boys and young men of color is one of the original 10 outcomes articulated in the BHC strategy. The decision for making this an explicit goal has been key in mobilizing our internal resources and in engaging our external partners on this issue. The explicit articulation of the outcome gave us the space and the imperative to have the strategy conversations and resource allocation decisions to advance the work. In fact, the focus on young males has become a leading indicator of our health equity work. It has operated as an important lens with which to view our overall norms and systems change efforts. We now ask questions such as: Are we engaging boys of color in our youth engagement efforts? Are our outreach and enrollment efforts reaching boys and men? Are strategies having positive effects on boys as well as girls?

### *Shared Ownership and an Embedded Strategy Key for Sustaining*

One of the early decisions we made about the Sons & Brothers work was to make it a cross-cutting priority across all The Endowment's programs, instead of a separate initiative. We made the decision early on to make it cross-cutting, because we didn't want the work to be marginalized or end prematurely. Initiatives end or get cut. We wanted this work to be a core part of the 10 year BHC strategy—rather than a piece that can be spun off or discarded. This decision made it harder to execute because it was an explicit population focus within a broader strategy focused on policy, systems, and environmental change effort that we hadn't done before. As we implement the work today, we strongly believe it was the right call, because it positions the work to be more sustainable over time. We now have two co-leads managing the effort across the Foundation—Ray Colmenar from Healthy California and Charles Fields from Healthy Communities. But the work is really broadly shared with Senior Vice Presidents allocating resources to the program, Directors actively engaged in strategy development; and program officers at the state and local levels with specific grantmaking responsibilities dedicated to Sons & Brothers.

### *Measurement: What is Counted Gets Done*

Because the Sons & Brothers program is embedded into the broader BHC strategy, we need to make sure it is implemented with intent and with purpose. One way we are doing this is to explicitly identify

outcomes and indicators related to Sons and Brothers within each of The Endowment's relevant program areas—Prevention, Schools, Neighborhoods—so we can track progress along the way, and hold ourselves accountable to the goals we are committing to. For example, our outreach and enrollment efforts will include a focus on males. Our positive school discipline and community safety efforts will also focus on young males. Similarly, we also are making sure that how we do our work—our drivers of change—is done with explicit attention to Sons & Brothers. This is most strongly felt in our youth engagement and communications efforts to change the narrative about youth of color.

#### *Dedicated Sons & Brothers Resources Can Leverage Broader TCE Investments*

A key challenge in implementing an embedded—but targeted—strategy is that it gets lost in the shuffle. One way we have tried to address this is to dedicate Sons & Brothers resources across the foundation. Healthy California, Healthy Communities, and Enterprise budgets now have dedicated resources. And, of course, the board has approved a \$50 million strategy throughout the remainder of the strategic plan. This explicit investment, in our experience, has functioned as a catalyst that influences the broader program areas. We can use the Sons & Brothers resources in strategic ways to complement other program investments to more fully integrate Sons & Brothers goals as part of broader programmatic efforts. The targeted resources also functions to engage external partners in incorporating a boys and young men of color focus in their work.

#### *Broad Based Leadership Essential*

Finally, and probably the most important success factor in advancing this work at the Foundation, has been broad level of leadership that exists within The Endowment from the CEO to program officers. The CEO—Dr. Robert Ross—has engaged directly on this effort, taking a 3 month study leave to interview dozens of leaders around the country, and then working with senior program staff to translate insights into the refined strategy adopted by the board. In addition to executive leadership, it was critical to broaden leadership and ownership within the Foundation of the Sons & Brothers work. As mentioned above, there is a now a team of program staff with direct responsibility and leadership for executing the strategy. We believe this is a promising example of cross-departmental collaboration and leadership.

The lessons above are insights about how The Endowment—as an organization—has worked internally to integrate, implement, and manage, the Sons & Brothers work within the institution. The following are some programmatic observations that are important to lift up, given the importance of their salience moving forward.

#### *The Role of Trauma and Healing in Improving Outcomes*

The Endowment's focus on health issues impacting young men of color has lifted up the significant role trauma, healing, and culture, play in the transformation of young people, their families, communities, and ultimately our state. Trauma and chronic adversity are everyday circumstances in many low-income, communities of color. Countless children experience violence, neglect, and poverty on a continuous basis—with significant implications for their development, behavior, and long-term health. When left unaddressed, these experiences become significant barriers to wellness. Additionally, service providers and systems that do not take trauma into account are, at best, likely to be ineffective in serving the needs of their clients; and worse, could further exacerbate the health conditions present.

Although the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) Study has clearly made the connection between childhood traumatic experiences with life-long chronic disease, the application of this

understanding has not been widely adopted in the medical community or in other traditional systems of care (i.e., social services, law enforcement, education, juvenile/criminal justice fields).

Trauma, much like other illnesses, is only a manifestation of broader and more systemic problems experienced in families and communities. Numerous scholars, practitioners, and advocates (Bloom, Rich, Tello, Carillo, and Corbin) have called to attention the experience of unaddressed trauma as a root cause of the social realities experienced by distressed communities. Often manifested through violence, poverty and lack of resources, trauma and chronic adversity (also termed toxic stress) are intricate ingredients in the recipe for poor public health outcomes. The Endowment aims to expand the integration of trauma and healing informed approaches within youth and family service delivery systems, through applied research, development of promising models, and policy and systems change strategies.

#### *A Focus on Norms Change*

The Endowment holds a fundamental belief that, in order to effect and maintain policy change, the public norm around an issue must be conducive to the policies that are being advanced. That is, what the public believes holds policies in place or serves as a catalyst for change. For example, as public norms around the LGBT population have shifted, policies in line with the new norm have become common, in both the public and private sectors.

In the case of boys of color, the public norms can be deeply entrenched in concepts that are deficit, not asset-based. We recognize that in order to promote policies that are smarter and better for boys of color (and others), we must first change public attitudes to embrace and support these young men. We call our work Health Happens Here to be able to depict in fresh, plain language the academic concept of social determinants of health. We call our work on boys of color Health Happens with all our Sons & Brothers to communicate our shared destiny and our relationship to each other. A major aspect of our Sons & Brothers work is and will be to seek to change the conversation about who boys and young men are and what they contribute to society and to California.

#### *Youth Engagement and Leadership*

A signature effort that has emerged as a critical component of the Sons & Brothers work is youth engagement and leadership. Already a key priority for BHC, the Sons & Brothers work has amplified the strategic importance of youth engagement in our efforts to build healthy communities. Our Sons & Brothers youth engagement work now has several components: local youth engagement activities in BHC sites; a Sons & Brothers summer camp; a youth leadership and advocacy training program; and an annual youth advocacy day in Sacramento. We achieve three important goals by investing in a robust youth engagement program:

1. We contribute to positive youth development of young people who are engaged in our youth engagement and leadership activities;
2. Youth organizing and advocacy has been instrumental in building policymaker support for a range of building healthy communities goals—school discipline policies, community safety, etc; and
3. Youth engagement itself contributes to changing the narrative and in demonstrating that young men of color are assets and leaders for California's future.

This last outcomes was most strongly evident in the August 2013 youth advocacy day in Sacramento when 250 young people, mostly boys and young men educated policymakers in the Capitol, telling their stories to individual policymakers as well as testifying at the Select Committee Hearings. Young

people themselves have been the most effective spokespeople about what it takes to build a healthy future for California.

Since the Board adoption of the strategy in August, we have been very busy executing the plan and are now applying the lessons we have learned in building a more robust implementation effort. We look forward to continuing our learning and doing.

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## Youth Leadership in Action



***"It was pretty cool. I felt I could make change that day, even if they [legislators] don't agree with you. You try to sway them. You're trembling, you are young, but you are still equals even if they sit in an office all day. You have the same power and the ability to make change happen."***

*– Young Leader*

**Figure 1 - Young Leaders during one of the 2012 Select Committee Hearings**

Throughout the last two years, something unusual has been happening in Sacramento, CA. Hundreds of young men of color have been walking the halls of the state capitol, talking to policy makers, sharing their stories, making their voices heard. Youth are being invited to the capital, organized, and assembled by the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color (the Alliance), and the California State Assembly's Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color, supported in part by The California Endowment. Throughout California, thousands of boys and young men of color have spoken at different events and have testified at legislative hearings, in order to raise awareness about the unique barriers they face. The advocacy and education efforts of these young leaders and their organizations, have led to policymaker support for several bills passed by the state legislature and signed into law by Governor Brown.<sup>1</sup> The youth and adults who support these new policies believe in the potential for transforming the lives of California's boys and young men of color.

The passage of these bills is evidence of the increasing appetite of policymakers throughout the state to address the needs of boys and young men of color as part of a broad commitment to improve the well-being of the state of California. Prominent community voices, including elected officials, youth, and religious leaders, are speaking out on the positive impact of specific changes in policy and practice that improve the health and well-being of youth, especially youth of color. The Endowment has played a critical role in putting issues affecting boys and young men of color, such as school discipline policies, on the state policy agenda and engaging communities in discussions about these critical issues. For example, after the passage of school discipline bills in September 2012, two of the biggest school districts in the state, Fresno and Los Angeles, took steps to end harsh school discipline policies and replace them with more supportive strategies, which will likely keep thousands of students in the classrooms learning and off of the street.

## An Emerging Focus on Boys and Young Men of Color

While there are more fights for equality and social justice still to be won at the capitol and in town halls across California, much has been learned from the significant outpouring of support by the public and policymakers that has emerged around issues of school climate and school discipline, juvenile justice reform, and jobs. The California Endowment's (The Endowment) work on school discipline and the dismantling of the "school to prison pipeline" has opened the door to progress on related issues that impact the health and well-being of boys and young men of color such as access to healthcare,

<sup>1</sup> The California Endowment's funding was not used for lobbying.

community safety and justice policies, and trauma and healing. The Endowment plays a critical role in supporting a larger movement around boys and young men of color in the state. This case study answers the question,

***How has The Endowment been supporting organizations statewide and locally to change policies and systems that improve the lives of boys and young men of color?***

To answer this question, it is important to understand the origins of The Endowment's Sons & Brothers work (previously referred to as Boys and Young Men of Color) and how it has grown over the past decade.

A deliberate focus on boys and young men of color at The Endowment originated during the planning process for its Building Healthy Communities (BHC) strategy that was adopted by the board in 2009. Dr. Robert Ross, The Endowment's CEO and President, and other members of the leadership team realized that its new strategy must reflect the changes in the demographics of California, and decided to increase its focus on equity.

## **A Changing Demographic**

The California population has been changing rapidly. It is increasingly evident that young people of color are critical to creating a healthier and more prosperous state. According to Census data, 70 percent of California youth under 25 years old identify as people of color; yet, many of these young people are having trouble staying in school and out of prison.<sup>2</sup> California fails to graduate 34.7 percent of its black and 25.5 percent of its Latino youth from high school, compared to 12.2 percent of its white youth.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, too many boys and young men of color live in neighborhoods marked by poverty, violence, lack of opportunity, and under-funded schools. Foundation leaders recognized that if they were going to work in communities to improve the health of Californians, the foundation would have to focus on vulnerable populations. In this case, it meant addressing the needs of boys and young men of color between the ages of 16 and 25. These challenges presented an opportunity for large scale social change that improves the lives of these boys and young men and future generations.

## **The Foundation Responds**

Even before the BHC strategy was adopted in 2009, The Endowment had been making grants to organizations primarily serving African American and Latino youth for several years. Consequently, during the early phase of BHC implementation, this grantmaking was disconnected from the foundation's other programmatic work. As the new BHC strategy began to take shape, a population-level focus on boys and young men of color started to grow in relevance inside the foundation. Yet, leaders still had to determine how this population-specific focus was going to fit into its overall BHC strategy.

A turning point for The Endowment's work around boys and young men of color came when Dr. Ross began to publicly identify the work as a core programmatic effort of the foundation. According to Robert Phillips, a former program director at The Endowment, *"He wasn't just talking about it internally anymore. It was going to be given the same level of attention as the other initiatives, and it made the work legitimate."* While the boys and young men of color grantmaking was still largely happening separate from other program areas, it was no longer in the realm of being considered a small project run out of the office

<sup>2</sup> The California Endowment. *Claiming the Promise for California's BMOC*.

<sup>3</sup> The Warren Institute. *Fast Facts: Status of Boys and Men of Color (National and California)*.



of the CEO. Foundation staff recall that the foundation's boys and young men of color efforts began to gain traction in late 2010.

The Endowment supported education around key issues, skill-building in organizing, advocacy efforts, research, convenings, and network building among grantees and young people themselves on health issues impacting this population. The Endowment also began piloting its boys and young men of color work in some of its 14 BHC communities. Program managers from five selected BHC sites asked to participate – Oakland, Fresno, and three sites around Los Angeles – Boyle Heights, Long Beach, and South LA. Local coalitions of organizations with varying levels of relationship with The Endowment's BHC efforts started working on issues, such as school climate, health access, and safety. The foundation's Sons & Brothers work gained further traction at the state level in 2012. At that time, The Endowment and The Alliance began partnering with the Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color.

In the summer of 2012, Dr. Ross decided to spend his sabbatical diving deeper into the issues affecting boys and young men of color by interviewing a range of interested parties “from preachers, politicians, and policy wonks to foundation leaders and felons.”<sup>4</sup> Resuming office in September of 2012, he was even more inspired to use the foundation's position and influence to be a leader on this issue.

Since 2012, The Endowment's commitment to improving the lives of boys and young men of color has continued to deepen. The board, in August 2013, approved a \$50M commitment to be put toward advancing issues related to boys and young men of color through 2020, and recently approved a new strategy under a new moniker: *Sons & Brothers*. In addition, The Endowment continues to demonstrate its leadership on the issue by partnering with other funders, such as Liberty Hill, the California Community Foundation, Dolores Huerta, and Sierra Health Foundation, to advance relevant work in California and to encourage foundations to get involved on a national scale.

## A Model of Collaboration & Alignment



Many foundation staff now refer to the Sons & Brothers work as a model of collaboration and alignment between local and state BHC efforts. In this case, alignment can be defined as:

***An intentional effort between local and state-level foundation staff and/or partners to coordinate, collaborate, or partner to achieve a common goal or objective.***

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Robert Ross. (April 2013). “Enough” and “Now.” Association of Black Foundation Executives’ Annual James Joseph Lecture.

This is a testament to the perseverance of foundation staff, grantees, and partners in overcoming the initial confusion, uncertainty, and frustration of figuring out how to effectively collaborate. As a result of the success of these collaboration and alignment efforts, the initiative to improve the lives of boys and young men of color has gained traction and interest from across the foundation – from work in the 14 Building Healthy Community sites to the statewide Health Happens Here campaigns.

During the past three years, The Endowment has made a number of distinct, yet interrelated contributions to supporting a statewide movement around Sons & Brothers by:

- 1. Building on local and statewide efforts already underway**
- 2. Establishing an independent platform that can foster joint action**
- 3. Partnering with systems leaders to capitalize on strategic opportunities**
- 4. Leveraging the BHC and Sons & Brothers platforms to pursue shared priorities**
- 5. Harnessing the passion of youth to change the narrative**

As the Sons & Brothers strategy has evolved, the organization and its partners have been learning important lessons about how to use all of its assets to improve the lives of boys and young men of color across the state.

## 1. Building on Local and Statewide Efforts Already Underway

In order to determine the best role for the foundation in supporting boys and young men of color, The Endowment examined the landscape of organizations currently working on issues affecting this population. The Foundation supported some exploratory local efforts and research and analysis to inform its strategy. Staff learned that a variety of organizations were tackling issues such as school climate, law enforcement, and “the school-to-prison pipeline.” Some of these were longstanding organizations advocating for policy and systems change at the community level, while others were working across multiple places or focusing on state-level policy change in Sacramento.

### Convening Statewide and Local Organizations

Many local and statewide organizations in The Endowment’s portfolio were already working to advance racial equity. However, these groups did not necessarily frame their work around gender or focus specifically on improving the lives of boys and young men of color. A number of statewide advocacy groups had been pushing to change state policy to increase racial equity, such as the Youth Law Center, ACLU of Northern California, Public Counsel, and Children’s Defense Fund. Many of these organizations had already worked together on specific issues, such as juvenile justice reform. Leaders from the Youth Law Center and Public Counsel had collaborated on issues related to school suspension and expulsion in California for decades prior to when the legislation passed. Similarly, local groups such as Urban Strategies Council and Community Coalition had been working on a range of issues that affected youth of color. These advocacy groups had acquired a wealth of knowledge, skill, and expertise over the years about these issues, and yet, many of these organizations were not coordinating or collaborating in an ongoing way. For example, advocates that cared about juvenile justice reform rarely collaborated with their counterparts who were focused on access to health care or education.

The Endowment wanted to explore how to engage state and local actors around a common boys and young men of color agenda. To do this, they convened a set of statewide and local actors to form the Leadership and Learning Network (the Network), which would later become known as the Boys and Men of Color Network and is currently called the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color. The purpose of the convening was to bring together organizations that advocated on different issue areas, such as health or education, but might not focus on a particular population segment.

Over time, The Endowment realized that it needed help convening these stakeholders, and did not just want to have a consultant take charge. Instead, it wanted to create an independent organization that would provide sustained focus on issues affecting boys and young men of color, and that could engage different types of organizations and leaders. In order to achieve this, the foundation supported the development of an independent network of state and local actors that would focus on policy and systems changes. The following organizations became the statewide anchor partners for the work:

- **PolicyLink**, a national equity research and action institute, engaged to develop the boys and young men of color strategy, and which is responsible for coordinating and convening members of the Network and the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color. In addition to its role statewide, PolicyLink has become the regional convener for the foundation’s Sons & Brothers work in the Fresno pilot site

- **Movement Strategy Center**, an intermediary that works closely with grassroots groups and which provides advocacy and coalition building support at a state, regional, and local level
- **Earl Warren Institute**, a center for policy research, which publishes research studies, frameworks, and policy briefs to improve a variety of outcomes (health, education, economic) for boys and young men of color
- **Fenton Communications**, an organization focused on communications and public affairs, which provides expert advice and technical assistance around communications and branding to The Endowment and its grantees

The Endowment also invited the following organizations to join the Network as regional anchor partners for the work:

- **Liberty Hill**, a nonprofit working for equality and opportunity in LA, which is the regional coordinator for the LA pilot sites (Long Beach, Boyle Heights, and South LA)
- **Urban Strategies Council**, a community support and advocacy organization in Oakland, which is the regional coordinator for the work in the Oakland-Alameda County pilot site;
- **PolicyLink**, which is currently the regional anchor partner in Fresno

Community-based partners were excited to be involved in the Sons & Brothers work and to participate as equal partners with the statewide anchor organizations. The Endowment staff designing the strategy around boys and young men of color suggested that Oakland, Los Angeles and Fresno were each a good strategic fit for Sons & Brothers. The geographic, historical, and demographic conditions in the three locations were different. And, most importantly, each locale already had an infrastructure in place. According to Ray Colmenar, an Endowment program manager charged with carrying out the statewide Sons & Brothers strategy,

*“As much as possible we wanted to engage and build on existing efforts. We didn’t have the resources to start from zero. We wanted to start in places that had strong local partners that had the interest and capability to help us figure out how to do this locally and as part of a statewide campaign.”*

During the past five years, The Endowment has developed long-term relationships with each of the community-based partners. The partners offer expertise, local context knowledge and awareness and experience in diverse areas that contribute to a more holistic approach to addressing issues impacting boys and young men of color, including greater emphasis on grassroots organizing (“base building”), strategic communications, and data-driven advocacy.

## Solidifying the Foundation’s Support

The Endowment’s review of organizations working on issues affecting boys and young men of color also revealed many longstanding community-based organizations committed to promoting social justice and racial equity that operated at the local level. Organizations such as Community Coalition, Inner City Struggle, CADRE, Californians for Justice, Gay Straight Alliance Network, Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY), and Khmer Girls in Action were functioning in communities selected to receive concentrated attention as part of BHC. For years, these organizations had been documenting the problem, rallying residents, and empowering youth to change policies and practices that had a negative impact on young people of color. For example, in 2007, RJOY teamed up with activists and the school district in Oakland to pilot an alternative approach to harsh school discipline.

The challenge for grassroots organizers and community advocates was influencing larger scale change. According to Ruben Lizardo, the foundation's partner at PolicyLink, *"There were a lot of people that cared about the issue. The challenge is that we weren't coordinated."* Coordination was difficult in part because many community-based organizations were relatively small and had limited resources to bridge geographic boundaries. In addition, the focus of their efforts was different in each locale. In some locations, partners' activities focused on gang injunctions and neighborhood safety; in others trauma, immigration, or school climate. The community-based organizations could inform and influence policy at the local level. However, successfully influencing regional or state-wide policy would require greater resources and different skills.

Locally, there was already a robust advocacy infrastructure in place, but the efforts were not necessarily connected and coordinated. During the first year the of Network meetings, the local and state-level partners spent time establishing relationships, building trust, articulating the Network's strategy, and finding ways to collaborate with other efforts underway. The Endowment also invested more intentionally in building local sites' advocacy capacity. According to Charles Fields, Regional Program Manager in Los Angeles,

*"The California Endowment had longstanding investments in the statewide advocacy infrastructure, but needed to concentrate more of its resources and efforts to building the capacity of young men to be leaders and change agents in their communities and connecting those local voices to a statewide advocacy infrastructure."*

In addition, The Endowment's statewide partners began to support local sites in several new ways. For example, Movement Strategy Center developed curriculum and provided technical assistance to several BHC sites to build their youth organizing capacity, which has been a critical component of the foundation's Sons & Brothers strategy. Similarly, the Warren Institute and Fenton Communications provided research and communications support to the sites. These efforts required patience and perseverance on behalf of The Endowment and its grantees, as state and local organizations clarified expectations for how to work together, learned from early mistakes and missteps, and developed more trusting relationships.

The Network represented a new platform for convening diverse but like-minded organizations and helping them to overcome barriers created by their disparate geographies and different focus areas. The Endowment's broader conceptualization of health based on a social determinants framework, created a more comprehensive framework for boys and young men of color efforts than the one already in place. Phillips explains, *"If environment matters more than anything else, then we need solutions that will improve homes, schools and neighborhoods. And if these places operate as a system, then we need strategies that connect these solutions to each other."* As a result, The Endowment helped to broaden the scope of boys and young men of color issues and made it easier for organizations to join together and take collective action. Organizations could now, for instance, work on school discipline issues as a collective, even if the issues they typically addressed were framed differently.

The fact that organizations had been working in their own siloes created a challenge that The Endowment had to overcome in order to spur collaboration among the organizations already working on issues around boys and young men of color. The challenge, the role of The Endowment in addressing it, and the outcome of the foundation's efforts are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. The Endowment's Role in Building on Local and State Efforts

The Challenge	The California Endowment's Role	Outcome
Fragmentation among organizations working toward outcomes that could improve the lives of boys and young men of color by issue area and geography. Lack of a common framework for discussing boys and young men of color issues broadly, resulting in efforts being pursued in silos.	<b>Convener:</b> The Endowment regularly gathered a diverse set of partners to develop a strategic plan using a comprehensive framework for understanding the variety of issues, policies, and practices that impact the well-being of boys and young men of color. Extended invitation to a broad set of organizations operating locally and statewide.	Organizations have started to recognize the interrelationship of the various issues they addressed historically, and are communicating more regularly, sharing knowledge and information, and working together to achieve a common goal.

## 2. Establishing an Independent Platform to Foster Joint Action

Early on, The Endowment's leaders were clear about two things. First, the foundation's Sons & Brothers strategy was not a foundation "initiative." Foundation staff involved in the initial strategic planning for Sons & Brothers advised against making it a separate initiative, and recommended embedding it within the BHC plan. "Initiative" implies a time-limited and foundation-centered effort, whereas, The Endowment intended for its work to strengthen and support a focus on health equity for boys and young men of color as part of the overall implementation of BHC. Second, given the foundation's focus on policy and systems change, the staff believed it was important to have external partners, including an entity independent from the foundation, which could carry forward the Sons & Brothers vision in a way that would lead to policy change. As Colmenar explains,

*"If we wanted to make this just an Endowment thing, we would have created just an initiative. But because we believed that it needed to be a bigger than us in order to achieve policy, systems, and norms change goals, we needed to support actors in the field who could build a constituency that would go beyond what we [as a foundation] would do."*

### Establishment of the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color

As The Endowment's Sons & Brothers efforts has evolved, the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, has emerged as a formal structure for bringing together statewide and local partners--many of which are grantees--to advance strategies identified by its predecessor, the Leadership and Learning Network. The Alliance has developed a range of policy objectives that includes increasing access to health services and reducing the number of youth entering the juvenile justice system (see box on page 10), among others.<sup>5</sup>

The goal of the Alliance is to enable grassroots organizers to join with statewide advocates and take collective action. This goal was ambitious, and achieving it has been difficult. One of the major challenges was to decide on which issues to address. According to a statewide partner, *"It took time for the Alliance partners to gel and figure out its objectives; those that are Endowment-specific and those that are*

<sup>5</sup> Alliance for Boys and Men of Color. (March 2013). *Purpose and Policy Objectives* (PDF). Handout at Convening on Boys and Men of Color hosted by The California Endowment.



*Alliance-specific.*” Partners wondered how much control over the strategies and objectives of the Alliance the Endowment would require. The Endowment’s staff consistently communicated that the work of the Alliance members should not be limited to Endowment-directed activities, yet it was difficult to discern where, if at all, the priorities of The Endowment and the priorities of the Alliance differed.

The Endowment partners recognized that perhaps the biggest demarcation was that members of the Alliance could lobby (with funds from other sources) and The Endowment could not. The Endowment’s nonprofit status prevents it from using its funds to lobby for specific legislation. Therefore, the Alliance has been an important partner for the boys and young men of color work because of its ability to receive grants from other institutions that can be used to advocate for specific legislation, in addition to receiving grants for related policy activities such as educating, convening, and capacity building. According to an Endowment program manager, *“I think the Alliance has started successfully. They’re identifying funding partners and putting in their own resources. We tell people they can’t lobby with our money.”*

As the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color has grown, the foundation’s partners are starting to perceive that the statewide work is becoming more independent from The Endowment. Some Alliance partners have formed working groups and have begun to identify policy issues separate from The Endowment’s involvement. However, others still do not perceive the Alliance as completely independent from The Endowment. One statewide partner describes how current funding patterns limit their ability to differentiate: *“Although [The Endowment] wants the Alliance to thrive outside of the issues they’re focusing on, it’s hard when a large majority of Alliance members are funded by The Endowment.”* Foundation leaders believe that the Select Committee hearings provided a turning point for Alliance partners to learn how to work together as a group and build their capacity for collective action.

More than two years into convening state and local partners to work on issues related to boys and young men of color, the Alliance has become a space where organizations have grown familiar with each other’s work. Partners are organized in several workgroups based on the Alliance’s priorities (e.g., school discipline, health, employment). Several members of the workgroups are also engaged in the different BHC campaigns (Health Happens in Neighborhoods, Schools, and Prevention) which facilitates integration between BHC and Sons & Brothers work. The engagement of BHC grantees with the Alliance is helping grantees tailor their work to support boys and young men of color or view their work through the lens of boys and young men of color.

In some cases, it has been challenging to keep partners engaged and to foster collaboration among The Endowment’s grantees. For example, some BHC statewide partners are working with the Alliance’s Health Workgroup to remove barriers for men of color to enroll in affordable health plans supported by the new Affordable Care Act legislation. A statewide partner explains, *“The Workgroup*

#### **Alliance for Boys and Men of Color Policy Objectives**

1. Increase access to health services that recognize the strengths and assets of boys and young men of color while also responding to the trauma and chronic adversity that many face
2. Achieve 100 percent high-school graduation rates among boys and young men of color by strengthening the performance of public schools and reducing suspension rates
3. Ensure boys and young men of color live in safe neighborhoods and can attend safe schools
4. Reduce the numbers of youth who enter the juvenile justice system and ensure those who leave the system have the skills needed to succeed
5. Increase access to the types of education and training that lead to meaningful employment

*agenda isn't about healthcare and insurance. The group talks about trauma informed care, healing places [ ] there doesn't seem to be a strong interest in coverage issues."* Identifying common goals has proven challenging for some Workgroups, many of which engage a diverse set of stakeholders with varied missions and approaches. As a consequence, some groups continue to interact frequently, yet have largely continued operating independently from each other.

Currently, the Alliance plays an important role engaging BHC sites and their grantees in boys and young men of color work. The Alliance, together with The Endowment organized the first Boys and Men of Color and BHC Conference in Los Angeles in April 2013, where grantees from the 14 sites learned about the ways in which they could be involved in Sons & Brothers work statewide. The Alliance is engaging partners through webinars and trainings in topics such as strategies to improve the health of California's undocumented young men of color, food policy, and job training, among other topics. Over the past year, there has been an intentional effort to extend the Sons & Brothers network, and as a result the Sons & Brothers work has grown past the initial pilot sites.

One of the challenges in fostering an independent platform for collaborative efforts between local and state-level actors has been distinguishing the agenda and activities of the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color from The Endowment's own agenda. The foundation's role as it continues to overcome this challenge is summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. The Endowment's Role in Establishing an Independent Platform for Joint Action**

The Challenge	The California Endowment's Role	Outcome
Distinguishing the work of the Alliance from the work of The Endowment given the substantial overlap between the two entities' priorities and fact that many of the member organizations are also grantees	<b>Communicator:</b> The Endowment has communicated early and often that it expects the Alliance to grow in a way that is not overly reliant on the foundation's funding or support. For that reason, The Endowment has provided resources to further distinguish its work from that of the Alliance	The Alliance is starting to build its own identity and brand apart from The Endowment, and new funding partners are needed to reinforce this independence over the long-term

The partnership with the Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color, highlighted in the vignette below, illustrates how a network of state and local actors can begin to work in concert to advance the health and well-being of all of California's youth.

## Select Committee Hearings Raise the Profile of Boys and Young Men of Color Statewide

The Endowment's relationship with the Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color is a good example of how the Endowment's Sons & Brothers strategies have coalesced and spurred collective action. When The Endowment began its boys and young men of color work, it did not anticipate that a Select Committee of the state legislature would emerge. The purpose of the Select Committee is to examine key issues affecting the health and well-being of boys and young men of color in California and to create a comprehensive state policy plan to address their needs. Initially, the Select Committee decided to address six main areas impacting this population: health, education, employment and wealth, violence prevention, youth development, and juvenile justice.

As the Select Committee considered how to structure a process to gather data to inform policy action in these areas, it decided to hold a series of hearings, and asked for the Endowment's support. *"At the end of the day what we really wanted was some action. We need laws, and we need to change the mentality of people about this problem,"* explained Larry Broussard, chief of staff to former Select Committee Chair Sandré Swanson. The foundation immediately recognized that the partnership with the Select Committee was a strategic opportunity to harness the platform of the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color. The Alliance was an independent platform supported by the foundation which included youth, community organizations, and systems leaders. Rather than supporting the Select Committee directly, The Endowment decided to support the Select Committee work through the Alliance and its partners. This was a unique opportunity for The Endowment to influence policy by leveraging a statewide effort (Select Committee) already underway.

### Bringing Statewide and Local Partners Together

The Alliance and the foundation encouraged the committee to hold the hearings in different regions to allow more people to participate. This also capitalized on the growing local capacity of the 14 BHC sites to mobilize adult and youth leaders around an issue. Together, the Select Committee and Alliance members held a series of hearings in Oakland, Coachella, Los Angeles, Fresno and Sacramento. While the hearing planning process was underway, some of the Alliance statewide partners, including the Warren Institute and PolicyLink, began providing the Select Committee with information about the challenges facing boys and young men of color in the state.

The planning and implementation process of the hearings became a vehicle to strengthen the relationships between the Alliance's diverse set of members and state-level elected officials. Staff from local and state partners, such as Urban Strategies Council, Liberty Hill, PolicyLink, Warren Institute, and The Endowment became familiar faces at the state capitol. *"The Endowment was the one to give the Select Committee the statewide contacts, because they were funding these folks,"* said Opio Dupree, a legislative staffer at the time. He added, *"The Endowment was responsible for pulling all the necessary pieces together for the plan."* At the same time, the process of planning the local hearings provided a reason for local Alliance and BHC partners, including community-based advocacy groups, school districts, and city officials to work together.

## Creating a Place for Cooperation, Understanding, and Alignment

The hearings started in Sacramento and continued across the state. Each committee hearing was enlivened with the energy of hundreds of youth, parents, policymakers, foundation leaders, school officials, and community leaders. According to Broussard, *“Never have there been such a large number of community groups that came together on an issue. [ ] The partnership that formed created a synergy between the nonprofits working on this issue and the legislature.”*

During the hearings, it was common to see local school district officials in discussion with legislators and nonprofit leaders. The hearings served as a forum for policymakers to learn about the challenges affecting boys and young men of color in different geographic regions, and to hear about potential solutions.

The active and enthusiastic participation of hundreds of boys and young men of color in the hearings created a direct dialogue with the legislators and other local systems leaders. Their lived experiences helped legislators better understand their plight and the urgency of their situation. A young leader stated during one of the hearings *“How can we be expected to achieve at a high academic level, if we are experiencing conditions that are more like a prison and less like a school?”* Through the hearings and the work of the Alliance and the local BHC sites, the youth voice was at the forefront of the plan to change the conditions that impacted their future. In a statement announcing The Endowment’s commitment to its Sons & Brothers work in October 2013, Assembly member Steven Bradford, Steering Committee leader, said

*“What we saw was not just some young African American and Latinos, we saw the future leaders of California, we saw a group of young men that wanted to better themselves and their communities. I can speak on behalf of the entire committee when I say that hearing from these young men made us double down on our efforts to address this issue.”*

Having young leaders actively participating in the hearings was not only informative for the policy and systems leaders but also for youth themselves. *“It changes their thoughts on life, the people coming behind them, and transforms their whole perception of the world,”* a young community organizer observed.

## The Beginning of a Movement for Young Men of Color

The relationships between the Alliance, The Endowment and the Select Committee have continued to strengthen, and the unique role that each plays has become clearer over time. Yet, the influence of The Endowment and its statewide partners is undeniable. For example, the final action plan adopted by the Select Committee mirrors the goals of the Alliance and The Endowment’s Sons & Brothers strategy. The hearings have provided a platform for policymakers to see the movement around boys and young men of color issues that has been gaining strength throughout the state. In a recent statement of solidarity, many Alliance partners, including dozens of boys and young men wearing hoodies, participated in the adoption of House proposition 23, as a tribute to Trayvon Martin, in August 2013. They used a national tragedy to call on California legislators to take action to ensure a more successful future for the state’s young men of color.

The Endowment, the Alliance, and its partners are continuing to work tirelessly to inform and support policy makers and systems leaders so they can advance policies that will improve the life of California’s boys and young men of color.

### 3. Partnering with Systems Leaders to Capitalize on Strategic Opportunities

Another critical aspect of The Endowment's boys and young men of color efforts has been its attention to developing relationships with systems leaders at a state and local level. As the Alliance was taking shape, another effort was underway in Sacramento by a bipartisan group of legislators to establish the Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color in late 2011 (see vignette, pages 12-13). The Select Committee was tasked with developing a comprehensive set of state policy priorities.

The Select Committee was determined to use statewide hearings to identify specific policy actions that could help to solve the problems that were preventing boys and young men of color from thriving. *"It's uncommon for a committee like [the Select Committee on Boys and Men of Color] to make a commitment to the field, to partner together and go deep on some issues,"* said Lizardo, the foundation's partner at PolicyLink. By pursuing a deliberate strategy that engages the legislature, The Endowment and its local and statewide partners have an opportunity to maximize their impact on the lives of young people in the state. The engagement in the hearings created a more formal relationship with the Select Committee. The Alliance now had a direct avenue to move policy from the different sites participating in the boys and young men of color work to the state legislature. Also, many of the Alliance's statewide partners supported the work of the Select Committee. The work of the foundation, the Alliance, and the Select Committee became highly aligned.

In addition to engaging elected officials through the statewide Select Committee process, The Endowment has been proactive in engaging local systems leaders in its local Sons & Brothers efforts. For example, in Oakland, the Sons & Brothers work is organized around two tables comprised of systems leaders and community partners. Its Public Systems Leadership Table includes leaders from five key local governmental agencies, including the Oakland Mayor's Office and Alameda County Department of Health. The Community Partners' Table includes key nonprofits and community organizations working with youth, such as the Black Organizing Project and the East Bay Asian Youth Center. Urban Strategies is supporting both tables' collaborative efforts to determine their priorities and identify an issue they could work together to address. The Select Committee hearings provided an opportunity for both tables to come together. *"We saw the two tables acting together during the Select Committee hearing. All of the systems leaders testified, the community partners were very involved, and so were youth,"* said Sandra Davis, East Oakland BHC Program Manager.

At times, The Endowment's dual relationship with community organizers and advocacy groups posed a challenge to developing a strong partnership with public officials. The Endowment and its partners at the Alliance wanted to ensure that advocacy groups and organized residents presented a united front, voicing concerns and solutions that policy officials could respond to. Because community and state-level groups represent the interests of different constituencies, they can also have different expectations for what constitutes a policy "win." In some cases, community advocates have used tactics or language that puts public officials on the hot seat, isolating them, rather than bringing them along as partners. The Endowment's role in fostering relationships with systems leaders is summarized in Table 3.

Keeping community-based organizations engaged in the ongoing work of the Alliance and its various policy workgroups and action teams will continue to be a challenge. The Select Committee hearings provided an opportunity for local groups to rally, and for youth and other community leaders to get

involved in tangible ways. The Endowment will need to continue to manage the diverse interests and needs of state-level advocates and grassroots organizers as its work moves forward.

*Table 3. The Endowment's Role in Partnering with Systems Leaders*

The Challenge	The California Endowment's Role	Outcome
Leaders at the community and state-levels use different strategies and tactics to influence policy change. These groups represent the interests of different constituencies (e.g., community-specific versus statewide), and may have different expectations of what constitutes a policy "win."	<b>Connector:</b> The Endowment connected public officials working in the Select Committee to the Alliance and its statewide and local partners so they could organize around common issues and collaborate; it is funding effective organizations to foster local collaboration between diverse groups.	Alliance partners gained credibility in the eyes of both state and local public officials, making it easier for the Select Committee to adopt a plan that largely reflects these issues, priorities, and framework that The Endowment and Alliance partners had identified.

## 4. Leveraging the BHC and Sons & Brothers Platforms to Pursue Shared Priorities

The Endowment recognized early on that improving the lives of boys and young men of color was an effort that cut across the foundation's place-based (Healthy Communities) and statewide (Healthy California) efforts, and staff worked hard to make sure boys and young men of color were a core priority within the overall BHC plan.

Since The Endowment's Sons & Brothers and BHC efforts evolved in tandem, Endowment staff and grantees alike have wondered how to most effectively integrate the two strategies. The Endowment sees BHC as a platform for advancing boys and young men of color issues in the future. As Charles Fields, Regional Program Manager explained, *"I view the BHC work as a big tent with lots of populations, content areas, strategies under it. And, I see our boys and young men of color work much more as a scalpel. It's more specific and targeted."* While this view is held by some Endowment staff, integrating BHC and Sons & Brothers efforts has not been easy.

In part, the challenge comes from differences in how specific sites approach issues related to boys and young men of color. For example, at the end of the BHC planning phase, only the three designated pilot sites —Fresno, Oakland, and LA—were explicitly developing strategies to target improvements in among boys and young men of color. And none of the 14 BHC sites chose the Endowment-endorsed outcome — "Health gaps for boys and young men of color are narrowed" — as one of their community priorities for BHC during the planning process. Sandra Davis, an Endowment program manager in Oakland explains, *"In Oakland, we didn't prioritize that outcome, but people were deliberate in saying that this is a population that needed to be looked at. It was like an overarching priority."* Other BHC program managers express a similar viewpoint, particularly in places where a large proportion of young people are people of color.

An understanding of the cross-cutting nature of boys and young men of color work was at play in other communities, as well. From conversations with local BHC site staff and program managers, The Endowment learned that that issues affecting boys and young men of color, such as violence, trauma,



school discipline, and policing practices, were critical priorities for the community, but they were not defined as a specific priority area. Rather, these issues were seen as integral to every aspect of their work, particularly in places where the majority of adults and youth are people of color.

## School Discipline Brings Together BHC and Sons & Brothers

Some of The Endowment's ongoing efforts to integrate its Sons & Brothers and BHC efforts have already begun to yield results. A prime example is in the area of school discipline. Statewide program staff working to advance the BHC Health Happens in Schools campaign identified an opportunity to take concerns that were being voiced by youth in BHC communities including Fresno and Los Angeles and broaden the campaign to the statewide level.

A confluence of events made it possible to connect the BHC and Sons & Brothers activities. The Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color hearings provided an opportunity for BHC and Sons & Brothers staff and grantees to work together to bring school discipline to the attention of policymakers through rallies, testimony, and other communication channels. In addition, two of the Sons & Brothers pilot communities had already identified school discipline as a priority, and sent large numbers of youth to speak at the regional Select Committee hearings, as well as at the events held in Sacramento. The young people shared personal stories of how harsh school discipline policies had affected their own lives—presentations which were emotional, deeply moving, and very powerful. This set the stage for school district officials to speak about the urgent need for policy changes to reduce unnecessary suspensions and expulsions. One such speaker was Tony Smith, former Superintendent at Oakland Unified School District, an early BHC partner.

By October 2013, several school discipline bills had been voted on and approved by the legislature, and signed into law by Governor Brown. The success of this BHC campaign has helped focus the attention of statewide – and some local – Sons & Brothers partners on an issue that also resonated with organizations working on the BHC Health Happens in Schools campaign. The Endowment staff intentionally connected Sons & Brothers and BHC partners so that their efforts were coordinated, and resources were shared for maximum impact.

## Integrating BHC and Sons & Brothers Locally

Despite the success in advancing issues such as school climate and school discipline, efforts to integrate the goals of Sons & Brothers and BHC have been a work in progress. The Endowment had to overcome a number of structural and implementation hurdles in its quest to further align BHC with its targeted efforts to improve the lives of boys and young men of color.

The three Sons & Brothers pilot sites have engaged in an ongoing process of experimentation and learning to understand whether and how to best integrate the efforts of grantees pulled in through its boys and young men of color and BHC strategies. Some sites have experienced tensions between local BHC partners and grantees and those working with boys and young men of color issues when the organizations have not always perceived each other as collaborators working toward a common goal. As a result, organizations working locally may duplicate efforts, and some may even perceive others as competitors for funding or the involvement of youth in their work. For example, Sons & Brothers and BHC integration has been a priority in Fresno, and The Endowment staff has spoken about the need to integrate efforts between the BHC and the boys and young men of color Youth Tables. Fresno Program Manager Sarah Reyes explains, *"We wanted it to be one effort in Fresno. We didn't want BHC and BMOC to be two separate initiatives or efforts. Our resources aren't as great as other places. Our issues*

*intertwine with each other.*” For example, Students United to Create a Climate of Engagement, Support and Safety (SUCCESS), worked with the school district to implement restorative justice practices for three years. It led a successful campaign that ended in a decision by the Fresno Unified School District Board to scale up restorative justice practices district wide, and was accompanied by a \$500,000 implementation commitment from the district’s Superintendent. In Oakland, youth-focused organizations supported through grants from BHC and Sons & Brothers are collaborating to ensure that these best practices around schools’ restorative practices are institutionalized and spread throughout the district.

The Los Angeles Sons & Brothers effort started later in the process. The Endowment’s LA team, which included the three LA program managers and Beatriz Solis, Director of Healthy Communities South, took a very intentional approach to aligning the BHC and Sons & Brothers work. The Endowment’s LA team decided that all the organizations supported by the boys and young men of color funding, would also need to be anchor organizations for BHC. *“We knew boys and young men of color had to be integrated in BHC, so we chose organizations that are in both worlds,”* explained Charles Fields.

In some cases, tensions arose due to the different ways of defining the local BHC agenda. On the one hand, the BHC agenda includes a broad range of issues, from land use to violence prevention and health access; and on the other hand, the agenda focuses on very specific geographic target areas. By contrast, the Sons & Brothers agenda can be interpreted as narrowly-focused on specific issues that only relate to a subset of each site’s population, yet can also include activities that are regional or statewide in scale. One benefit of bringing a population-specific lens to the local BHC work is the lack of a specific geographic zone. *“I consider it a good thing that boys and young men of color doesn’t lack the acute geographic restrictions that the BHC does,”* said a BHC grantee.

Integrating BHC and Sons & Brothers has created tensions within The Endowment as well. When The Endowment created a budgetary line item for addressing issues related to boys and young men of color, the intent was to provide program managers with additional resources to allocate toward advancing boys and young men of color issues locally and statewide, and to create a greater focus on boys and young men of color within BHC. In practice, this has yielded unintended tensions and confusion. In Oakland, for example, grantees distinguish themselves as working on either BHC or boys and young men of color efforts. This language helps to create boundaries around the scope of grantees’ activities in helpful ways, yet it also has been used to determine who might be “in” or “out” of an event or conversation. As an Endowment grantee explains, *“At the first statewide convening [ ] there was a lot of confusion among boys and men of color and BHC grantees around who was doing what.”* In some places, BHC and Sons & Brothers leaders may be working on the same issue, but with different organizations and strategies. For example, a BHC site might create a committee to work on school discipline comprised largely of BHC grantees, even though a boys and young men of color committee is also working on school discipline. The Endowment is well aware of this challenge and has started to make sure that Sons & Brothers and BHC are integrated sufficiently to reduce duplicative (or even competing) efforts and structures, though it likely will remain a challenge in the future.

So far, the approach that seems most effective has been integrating Sons & Brothers work into the BHC activities already underway, rather than dictating that boys and young men of color activities must be carried out in addition to, or in lieu of, the BHC funded efforts. For example, in the Sons & Brothers LA coalition, Brothers, Sons, Selves, the major youth organizations leading the BHC youth work were asked to be part of the pilot sites and participate in the Alliance. Early on, youth-serving organization leaders identified issues that would align with both the BHC and Sons & Brothers work, and they chose school discipline as a primary focus for their local boys and young men of color efforts. As a result, the boys and young men of color strategy and campaign in LA is also the BHC youth strategy and campaign.

Another factor that aids integration is The Endowment's partnership with Movement Strategy Center and other organizations that are able to serve as a bridge between sites or different types of organizations (e.g., grassroots advocates and state-level policy wonks). Movement Strategy Center understands the on-the-ground local grassroots organizing and advocacy efforts that are occurring across several BHC sites, and this enables the Center to provide guidance on how to integrate BHC and Sons & Brothers efforts. It also positions them to provide technical assistance and capacity building for sites' youth leadership and youth organizing activities, which have been well-received by local BHC grantees and program staff.

Partners are now starting to see some benefits of integration across BHC and Sons & Brothers. One outcome has been that local BHC sites are now more capable of identifying priorities on which local stakeholders can take concrete action. A mantra of one youth participant in the boys and young men of color work is, *"No meeting without a mission, no committee without a campaign."* The local boys and young men of color work is driven by community priorities, yet has a narrower focus than most sites' BHC work, making it easier for partners to determine their priorities.

## Integrating Sons & Brothers and BHC Statewide

The issue of school discipline spurred a greater recognition of the complementary nature of The Endowment's BHC and Sons & Brothers work, both locally and statewide. For The Endowment staff and anchor partners at the local pilot sites, this synergy was already obvious. Yet, statewide Sons & Brothers grantees were not always sure how to support both Sons & Brothers and BHC efforts—in part because Sons & Brothers and BHC are structured differently. For example, organizations that receive grants spanning multiple communities may be expected to work with BHC sites and grantees. However, some statewide grantees have experienced strong pushback from local program managers, site staff, and grantees, particularly when the services or support they are offering do not directly align with the current understanding of community priorities.

In many communities, local program managers and hub staff serve to direct traffic for the site and help the site prioritize opportunities so that partners do not get bombarded with competing requests. To some statewide partners, program managers and Hub staff can seem like gatekeepers for a BHC site, and it can make communication and collaboration between statewide grantees and local organizers more complicated and complex. This tension is common in movement building work. The challenge of connecting local and state level efforts has been well documented for organizations that are engaging in concurrent strategies to inform policies at local, state, and regional levels. The Endowment has been deliberate in nurturing relationships and connections between its state and local Sons & Brothers work to strengthen collaboration and alignment.

At the state level, The Endowment staff has aimed to strategically identify partners with a demonstrated commitment to issues that are also priorities for the boys and young men of color agenda. For example, The Endowment program managers have approached organizations such as the California Pan Ethnic Health Network, which focuses on increasing health coverage, in order to expand the number and types of organizations working on boys and young men of color issues. This approach has worked best when statewide BHC partners are working on issues that align specifically with the priorities of local BMOOC partners, such as increasing trauma-informed practices or providing support for youth in the juvenile justice system.

Looking ahead, The Endowment is taking bold steps to further integrate boys and young men of color priorities into BHC through the development of clear rules for cross-departmental collaboration around

boys and young men of color efforts. In addition, The Endowment is supporting the expansion of the Alliance to increase its reach (through a platform for boys and young men of color statewide) into more of its BHC sites, and other communities in California that are not currently part of BHC. In March 2013, The Endowment held the first convening of all its local BHC partners to learn more about the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color and to extend an invitation for more communities to get involved. The foundation's Sons & Brothers strategy explicitly links its boys and young men of color work to the priorities and tactics of the three BHC campaigns.

The Endowment has played several roles to addressing the challenge of integrating its Sons & Brothers and BHC efforts locally and statewide, which are summarized in Table 4.

*Table 4. The Endowment's Role in Leveraging BHC*

The Challenge	The California Endowment's Role	Outcome
BHC and Sons & Brothers began as separate and independent internal efforts with different funding streams, which made it difficult to pursue an integrated approach to addressing boys and young men of color issues within the context of BHC	<b>Connector:</b> Having The Endowment leadership and site-level program managers champion the integration of BHC and Sons & Brothers and communicate its importance to staff and grantees, has helped to connect organizations and reinforce the importance of working together toward a common goal	The Endowment's Sons & Brothers staff were able to identify similar objectives of Alliance for Boys and Men of Color statewide and site partners, and the BHC effort overall around school discipline, which helped to change state policy
BHC and the Sons & Brothers' partners and grantees do not always see themselves as collaborators or partners working toward a common goal	<b>Influencer:</b> The Endowment has reached out strategically to organizations that can support a shared BHC and Sons & Brothers agenda. Recently, The Endowment has asked statewide BHC grantees to include objectives related to boys and young men of color as part of their grant renewal process	Organizations are learning how to integrate boys and young men of color priorities into their BHC work

## 5. Harnessing the Passion of Youth to Change the Narrative



Figure 2 - Young leaders during Boys and Young Men of Color Camp 2012

Youth have been central to the foundation's boys and young men of color strategy from the very start. As one young leader said, youth are being engaged *"not only as stakeholders, but thought partners and their own advocates."* Youth currently participate in a variety of activities, managed by Endowment program manager, Albert Maldonado, including sitting on local governing bodies (e.g., BHC steering committees), participating on Dr. Ross's President's Youth Council, attending BHC Summer Camp, and leading the work of the BHC Statewide Steering Committee on Youth leadership.

Moreover, thousands of youth have shown up to advocate for better school discipline policies at local school board meetings and legislative hearings. Young people are passionate, they want to get involved, their energy is infectious, and their testimonies can change hearts and minds—especially those of key decision-makers and community leaders.

As part of the Los Angeles Sons & Brothers work, youth organizing groups are able to collectively mobilize young people for action on a specific issue, such as removing "willful defiance" as a legitimate rationale for suspending or expelling a student. With Liberty Hill managing the campaign and determining logistics for the various participating local youth organizing groups in the region, the efforts have been more effective. According to local organizers and school officials, the ability to mobilize such a large number of youth from across LA was an important factor in the passage of a new School Climate Bill of Rights for LA Unified School District in spring of 2013, which eliminated "willful defiance" as a factor for suspensions and expulsions.

The statewide Boys and Men of Color Camp also plays a critical role connecting and fostering Sons & Brothers in the different BHC sites. Over the last three years, youth from all over the state have come together for a transformational experience where they learned about youth leadership, participated in healing circles, shared their life experiences, and learned from each other. For example, one young camp participant reflected, *"During the camp we discuss different policy issues in the state that affect us. During those discussions I felt I was really being heard when I was giving out information. People were truly listening to me."* The camp gives youth a broader perspective of how the work they are doing locally connects with the statewide work and the work in other communities in California. They are able to see how the issues affecting them are also affecting youth in other parts of the state, and, most importantly, how youth in other communities are advocating for positive change. According to some foundation program managers, the camp has helped strengthen youth involvement in BHC in sites where it has been difficult engaging with youth.

The Endowment is also funding grantees to build youth leadership skills so they can be more effective advocates for themselves and their communities. A young leader in Sacramento explained, *"I have grown into a better leader, and I can help others, I sit down with them and help them out. I've also become a better public speaker; I can stand in front of people without passing out and losing all of my words."*



When youth are properly trained, they are able to more effectively participate in the different local and statewide opportunities presented by the Alliance and BHC, such as immigration marches in Santa Ana or the efforts to engage with the school district in Fresno.

The ability of these enthusiastic and properly trained youth of color has been a pivotal factor in the early success of the Sons & Brothers work. As staffer in Sacramento explains

*“This morning, we saw something we don’t see very much: actual testimony affecting policymakers. Before a hearing, you usually know what the vote count is going to be. But in this case you can see the testimony of these young men impacting some of the decisions. It’s actually changing minds. That’s the impact I’ve seen.”*

The involvement of young men in the work is part of The Endowment’s commitment to change the narrative about this group. *“Most of the work with this community is focusing on the donut hole instead of the cake. We need to focus on the cake, we need to focus on youth as assets,”* said a foundation program manager. As the work has unfolded, numerous examples of how youth are changing the narrative in California have emerged. For example, youth in Fresno sat with the Superintendent of the Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) to discuss including restorative justice and alternatives to harsh school discipline policies. In May 2013, thanks to the involvement of Fresno youth, the FUSD Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to implement a school discipline framework of restorative justice. This is just one of example of how, through the Endowment’s Sons & Brothers work, Latino, African American, and Asian youth are changing how they are perceived. An increasing number of communities in California are seeing the contributions that youth of color are making and can make to society, rather than focusing solely on their vulnerabilities and needs. A participant in one of the youth programs in Sacramento said, *“I was being trusted, I was the youth representative for the steering committee. You go out there and speak in front of super intelligent people. It was great to see them look at me and understand what I was saying.”*

One of the major lessons learned through The Endowment’s youth leadership work for boys and young men of color is the importance of engaging adult allies and developing a structured way of engaging youth. As an Endowment program manager explains,

*“Young people have been really successful, but not of their own accord. We need infrastructure, adult allies, and opportunities to excel. It doesn’t just happen by surprise. It takes a coordinated and organized effort to get youth to the places where they can make change. Without structure in place we don’t have youth leadership.”*

Developing trusted relationships with young people takes time. A number of The Endowment’s local partners have well-established track records working with youth. And it’s often based on these trusted relationships with adults that youth gain the confidence and skills to take on youth leadership or organizing efforts, whether they are part of building a new park in Santa Ana or organizing an annual Boys and Men of Color Summit in Sacramento. These examples illustrate that boys and young men of color are not just being engaged in the pilot sites, but across the 14 BHC sites.

Another lesson learned in working with youth is that there is an urgent need to develop a greater number of young leaders. Particularly in places where youth organizing capacity has been historically low, local nonprofits end up in competition for the attention and involvement of the same young people. And where BHC and Sons & Brothers are not integrated well, this has created some confusion. *“Who is their allegiance to? The BHC group, the boys and men of color group, or the nonprofit we are working with?”* asked an Endowment program manager. *“Youth see all these different names doing work that’s of*



*interest to them, but have no way to properly divide their time and decide whose meetings to attend.”* To help address this issue, The Endowment is supporting statewide partners, including Movement Strategy Center and the California Center for Civic Participation, to increase the capacity of the different sites to reach out to more youth.

Developing youth leaders and supporting youth organizing has been one of the easiest connections to make between the Sons & Brothers and BHC work, because the strategy is largely the same. However, training youth leaders takes time. As a statewide partner said, *“You can’t just pull young people into a hearing and have them testify.”* In the haste of pursuing state-level policy changes, The Endowment has at times expected sites to send youth speakers at a moment’s notice. A partner in Oakland reflects, *“They asked us to bring about 20 young men of color to engage with legislators during hearings. We [ ] found ourselves having to respond without much advance notice.”* In order to help sites lay the groundwork for developing and training young leaders across the 14 BHC sites, The Endowment is promoting the sharing of best practices, and is piloting a Boys and Men of Color toolkit in several BHC sites so that sites do not have to start from scratch and reinvent the wheel.

The Endowment has played a critical role in listening to and addressing the needs of youth involved in its boys and young men of color campaigns, which is summarized in Table 5.

*Table 5. The Endowment’s Role in Harnessing the Passion of Youth*

The Challenge	The California Endowment’s Role	Outcome
Establishing an environment where youth can be fully active in and benefit from the Sons & Brothers work, and thereby demonstrate to society their great potential	<b>Enabler:</b> The Endowment has provided training to equip youth with opportunities for leadership locally and statewide, platforms for engaging with other youth, and stipends so that youth can become actively involved; The Endowment is attentive to making sure that the voices of boys and young men of color are being raised up and considered by foundation leaders and their partners (policymakers, nonprofits)	Youth are a central part of the Sons & Brothers work and their voices are being heard by policymakers and community leaders at local and state level. This is starting to change the way boys and young men of color are perceived by community leaders and elected officials

## The Role of The Endowment in the Sons & Brothers Movement

The Endowment's role in the statewide movement around boys and young men of color has evolved tremendously over the past five years. The foundation went from being a supportive funder of a small number of promising organizations to being the primary funder of boys and young men of color related-work statewide.

In carrying out its activities to strengthen the infrastructure and capacity around issues affecting boys and young men of color, The Endowment has played several critical roles beyond that of a traditional grantmaker (Table 6).

*Table 6. Roles The Endowment Is Playing in Supporting Boys and Young Men of Color*

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Representative Quote</b>
<b>Convener</b>	<i>"The Alliance is allowing opportunities for real collaboration, particularly for local partners. [ ] Many of our local partners, especially the base building partners (e.g., PICO), have a statewide infrastructure that allows them to participate. And for those organizations without the infrastructure, the Alliance has allowed them to expand their base of power in a way that would have been unlikely if the Alliance were not around."</i>
<b>Communicator</b>	<i>"[The Endowment] is the big gorilla. They get people to pay attention to things that they might not pay attention to. They were critical in pushing the ball over the fence for school discipline."</i>
<b>Connector</b>	<i>"The Endowment was responsible for pulling all the necessary pieces together for the plan. They were the ones who funded the Select Committee to use the Warren Institute, they had PolicyLink, and they brought those academic elements together for [the Committee's] use."</i>
<b>Influencer</b>	<i>"As grantees come and renew their grants, our program managers are putting in their work plan specific objectives related to boys and young men of color. That's how we're integrating our boys and men of color work with BHC."</i>
<b>Enabler</b>	<i>"The Endowment brought the youth to the Select Committee and made sure that their voices were heard. We had them testify. The youth already had stories; they just didn't have a forum to tell them."</i>

In addition, The Endowment has placed important boundaries around its Sons & Brothers work. Its efforts focus on developing the capacity of organizations and collaboratives to impact and influence policy, systems, and norms change. This means that the many programs and services that meet the immediate physical, mental, emotional, and material needs of boys and young men of color and their families must raise resources elsewhere.

As the evolution of the foundation's Sons & Brothers work illustrates, The Endowment's role as connector has been critical. The Endowment has fostered collaboration between local and state grantees and partners to advance policies on issues related to boys and young men of color. They have brought together diverse stakeholder groups, including lawyers, activists, politicians, and youth, that had not worked together before.

The Endowment has also influenced the direction of boys and young men of color efforts. Program managers are close to the work. As an Alliance partner reflects, *"The Endowment is always hands-on."*

*They have never stopped being hands on, because they committed a lot of money to do this.*” At the same time, the foundation realized that in order to have an impact on boys and young men of color policies statewide, it needed to support actors in the field who could advocate, and lobby for specific legislation. A foundation-led initiative would not give the partners the leverage required to achieve policy and systems change goals. As a result, The Endowment has positioned itself as a critical support for the larger movement around boys and young men of color issues statewide.

Thus far, The Endowment seems to be navigating well the delicate balance between being directive about its priorities while providing flexibility for grantees to tackle issues that might not align perfectly with The Endowment’s priorities, but are important for advancing boys and young men of color work broadly. According to an Alliance partner, *“There was an agreement between The Endowment staff and the state partners that we would not just work on the stuff The Endowment gave us.”* Grantees were asked to take part in strengthening the Boys and Men of Color network, rather than just accepting and executing on a specific grant agreement. As a Sons & Brothers grantee explains,

*“In the other [Health Happens Here] campaigns, The Endowment decides what the goals are. And while there is flexibility in the way the goals get done, there is an Endowment-driven agenda in the three campaigns. But we [Boys and Men of Color partners] have the Alliance that is actually surfacing and organizing folks and building an agenda.”*

At the same time, The Endowment continues to fund the vast majority of Alliance for Boys and Men of Color partners. This raises the question of how truly independent the statewide boys and young men of color agenda really is, and how independent it will be without more funding partners coming on board.

## Looking Ahead

While the Sons & Brothers work offers a compelling model for the rest of The Endowment to consider, it is also unique compared to other campaigns or tactics within the BHC strategy. These differentiators include focusing on improving the livelihood and well-being of a specific population, rather than around a specific issue, such as safety, land use, or transportation, or in a targeted place (within California).

In addition, the statewide Sons & Brothers effort has been informed by and designed in collaboration with community leaders since 2009. While many of the issues and policy solutions were identified early on, the process of building trust and bringing on partners was instrumental in establishing a level playing field where state and local level organizations could make decisions together, share resources, and take collective action.

Critical factors contributing to the early successes of The Endowment’s Sons & Brothers strategy have been to focus on building the capacity of young people to advocate on behalf of their communities through local community partners, supporting organizations like PolicyLink, Liberty Hill Foundation, and Urban Strategies Council to serve as conveners both locally and statewide, supporting powerful messaging and framing activities to change the norms for boys and young men of color, and establishing internal cross-departmental program teams that make connections internally and externally to advance Sons & Brothers.

The Endowment sees its role in improving the lives of boys and young men of color as an area for continuous learning. *“We’re entering into the space where our partners are occupying,”* described an Endowment program manager. *“We need to learn how to do that well, so we’re not stepping on toes and we’re emphasizing the change-making we’re [achieving] with the values and resources we have.”*

As the Endowment looks to the future, Sons & Brothers program staff have started to ask whether it will be possible to replicate the success of school discipline in other domains, such as land use, safety, and health care. It's clear that there is much work left to be done, both in terms of the agenda outlined for Sons & Brothers, as well as The Endowment's broader BHC campaigns.

There are several indicators that the infrastructure and leadership capacity that The Endowment has helped create will be sustained, at least in the near term. *"If The Endowment or PolicyLink went away, [the boys and young men of color] work would continue. We've created this tent so that people can get energy from one another without draining their other work,"* explained an Alliance partner. The tireless efforts by led by passionate, deeply committed leaders are not likely to cease any time soon. Similarly, the Select Committee will remain a public policy platform for issues affecting boys and young men of color as long as the interest and perceived need remains within the Assembly.

Ultimately, the strategy of The Endowment to advance the interests and well-being of boys and young men of color will continue to evolve. Based upon the accomplishments to date outlined in this case study, the prospect for future success of the efforts of The California Endowment's role to support the broader movement around boys and young men of color looks promising.





## FSG

FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm specializing in strategy, evaluation, and research, founded in 2000 as Foundation Strategy Group. Today, FSG works across sectors in every region of the world—partnering with foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and governments—to develop more effective solutions to the world's most challenging issues.